



Illinois in the War Between the States

Glossary

secede—to break away

Abraham Lincoln reading to his son Tad. Courtesy Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library.

For many years the problems of slavery and states' rights troubled the United States. In 1860, Abraham Lincoln of Illinois was elected president. People in the southern states were afraid that a president who was against slavery would change their way of life, and Lincoln had campaigned against expanding slavery. He won the 1860 election as the first Republican presidential candidate because the Democratic Party was split over the issue of slavery. Stephen A. Douglas, who was also from Illinois, represented northern Democrats and John C. Calhoun was chosen by the southern Democrats. A new political party—the Constitutional Union party—also ran a candidate. Lincoln won the election with just 39 percent of the popular vote.



After the election, Lincoln tried to calm the South by saying he would not end slavery in the states where it already existed. He also said that he was against the spread of slavery to any new states. He believed that slavery would die out sooner or later because it was wrong and because it had already been made illegal in so many other parts of the world. The only major countries that still allowed slavery were Brazil and the United States. Still, the majority of people in the South believed President Lincoln would change the state laws which allowed them to own slaves. Rather than lose the laws that allowed slavery, as well as the slaves themselves, the southern states decided to **secede** and form their own country. On December

Glossary

Confederate States of America—a new country formed by the 11 states that seceded from the United States

secessionist—a person or state that believed in breaking away from the United States

militia—an army made up of ordinary citizens instead of professional soldiers

regiment—a unit of troops in the army

recruit—a new soldier

immigrant—person who moves into a new country

20, 1860, before Abraham Lincoln had even left Springfield for Washington D.C., South Carolina became the first state to secede from the United States. Soon Alabama, Georgia, Florida, Mississippi, Louisiana, and Texas also seceded and joined the new **Confederate States of America**.

Many men in the U.S. army, including Robert E. Lee of Virginia, resigned rather than fight the people of their home states. Lee instead became the highest ranking Confederate military leader. United States military forts and property located in **secessionist** states were taken over by the new Southern **militias**. Fort Sumter, located in the middle of Charleston Harbor, would not surrender to the southern rebels. On April 12, 1861, cannons on the South Carolina shore opened fire on Fort Sumter. This action opened the bloody Civil War.

President Lincoln called for volunteers from the North to join the army to save the Union. His home state of Illinois organized thousands of volunteer troops into **regiments** and then trained and supplied them for battle. In most units, all the **recruits** were from the same local area. In big cities, like Chicago, many regiments were made up of only German or Irish **immigrants**. Sometimes these regiments had nicknames. For example, one Illinois regiment was recruited at the Illinois State Normal School. It had so many teachers and students in its ranks that it was called the Teachers' Regiment. When the 34th Illinois regiment was formed, it became known as the Lead Mine Regiment because so many of the men were from Galena in Illinois' lead mining region.

Among the men in the Lead Mine Regiment as it traveled from Galena to Springfield for training was a former professional soldier, Ulysses S. Grant. He became the highest ranking general in the Union Army before the end of the war and was later elected President of the United States. Grant attended the **United States Military Academy at West Point**, served in the **Mexican-American War**, was assigned to posts far from his family, then gave up military life. He was a business failure in civilian life. He was working for his father in Galena when the war broke out. The Governor appointed him to command the



Fort Sumter in Charleston Harbor. Courtesy Abraham Lincoln Digitization Project, Northern Illinois University Libraries <<http://lincoln.lib.niu.edu>>.



General Grant. Courtesy Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library.

Glossary

United States Military Academy at West Point—a school run by the U.S. Army

Mexican-American War—a war between Mexico and the United States fought between 1846 and 1848

lay siege—to surround a city, town or fortress and keep anyone or anything from going in or coming out in order to force surrender

volunteers. He got them into shape quickly and was made brigadier general of volunteers.

Most of the Illinois regiments were stationed at Cairo because it sat at the southern tip of Illinois. Only the Mississippi and Ohio Rivers separated the Union troops from the Confederate troops. The new recruits at Cairo, many from Illinois, were trained by general Grant and made ready to march into Kentucky, Tennessee, and Mississippi. Working with the U.S. navy, Grant attacked Paducah, Kentucky, and Fort Donelson in Tennessee. Grant's army then fought in a terrible battle at Shiloh, Tennessee. Grant then moved to **lay siege** to Vicksburg on the banks of the Mississippi River. After many months under terrible conditions, the Confederate troops were forced to surrender the city. The Union navy now controlled the Mississippi River.

Because of his many victories in the West and his determination to chase down the Confederate army, President Lincoln appointed Grant commander of the Union army. At this point, much of the fighting was on the east coast, near the Confederate capital of Richmond, Virginia. The fighting was horrible with thousands of wounded and dead on both sides. General Grant was **criticized** by some newspapers in the North because so many Union soldiers died in battle. Others argued that Grant should be given credit for trying to end the war. He ignored them, took his orders from President Lincoln, and continued to pursue the Confederates. Lee finally surrendered to Grant on April 9, 1865. The four years of hardship and fighting were over, but within a few days more grief swept over the North.

On April 14, 1865, President Lincoln was **assassinated** while watching a play at Ford's Theatre in Washington. An actor named John Wilkes Booth, angry that the South had lost the war and full of hatred because Lincoln freed the slaves, shot the president in the head. Many thousands of people **mourned** the fallen leader and lined the railroad tracks to see the train carrying his body back to Illinois for burial. The funeral train stopped in cities along the way so that the people could pay their last respects. Finally, he was laid to rest at Oak Ridge Cemetery in Springfield.

Glossary

criticize—blame, find fault

assassinate—to kill someone for political reasons

mourn—to show sadness over someone's death

fatigue—extreme tiredness

diarrhea—frequent and more than normal bowel movements

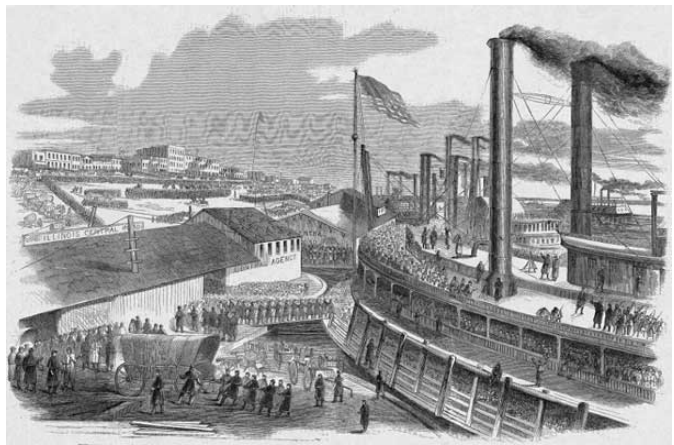
malaria—a serious disease transmitted to people by mosquitoes

whooping cough—a serious lung disease which causes violent coughing

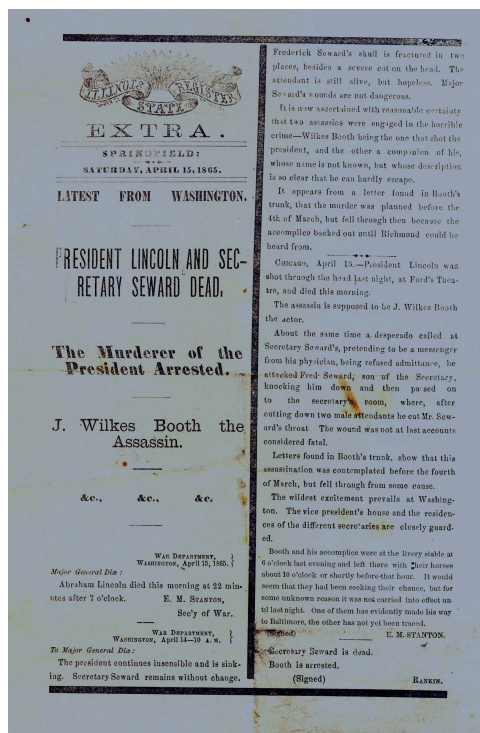
The war was over but the impact lasted for decades. During the war more than 250,000 Illinois men enlisted in the army and navy. Nearly 35,000 of them died. Many were killed on the field of battle, died later of their

wounds, or died in prison camps. More of them died from disease. The men lived close together in their forts and camps and this meant that diseases spread quickly. Insects, bad water

and food, few chances to bathe, and **fatigue** led to infections, **diarrhea**, and illness. Outbreaks of measles, **malaria**, **whooping cough**, and other sicknesses killed more soldiers than did guns and cannons.



Union troops leaving Cairo, Illinois, for the Western Campaign. Courtesy Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library.



Handbill announcing the death of Lincoln. Courtesy Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library.

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